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MASTER FILE

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MEMORANDUM FOR Brian Monaghan
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Attention: Management Training Branch

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Subject: Observing List /Enumerate Operation for the Census 2000 - Reno,
 Nevada

I. Introduction

For Census 2000, the Census Bureau is using several data collection procedures including Mailout/Mailback, Update/Leave, and List/Enumerate. List/Enumerate is a method of data collection used in sparsely populated (rural) and remote areas. I was able to observe this operation in the rural area surrounding Reno, Nevada.

II. Observation

I visited the Reno, Nevada Local Census Office(LCO) on April 4-5 to observe List/Enumerate operations for Census 2000. As a new census employee, this was my first visit to the field. I found the trip very informative. The office manager planned my observation visit effectively, so I was able to view a large number of activities during a two-day period.

During the morning each day, I observed LCO employees organizing a large volume of maps for efficient distribution to enumerators. Also, I observed check-in procedures where LCO employees verify field listing information. During afternoons, each day I accompanied a different enumerator to observe List/Enumerate operations. Within two days, I observed 14 interviews out of about 70 visited addresses. A large proportion of people were not at home

during our weekday visits. Evening or weekend visits may yield more interviews.

Discussions I had with the enumerators indicated that respondents thought the detail of the long form was unreasonable, and unnecessary for the census count. Therefore, there were difficulties getting people to cooperate. Even when the respondents were cooperative, the details on the long form such as annual costs for electricity and gas were hard for these respondents to give a reliable answer. One short-form respondent commented they were relieved because they did not receive the long form, which may relate to the negative publicity of the long form.

I met two different enumerators and I was impressed with their social skill and high quality in performing their task. Upon meeting a potential respondent, they always verified the addresses with the respondents before inquiring about the respondent's name. They conducted the interviews in a decent manner and were very polite. Although the techniques used for interviews were slightly different between the two enumerators, they both appeared to follow the standard procedures.

Prior to meeting respondents, the enumerators prepared the Assignment Area map. They listed all living quarters and marked areas with no living quarters on maps. On these maps, all living quarters were numbered in order starting with number 1. When marking down the map spots, they strictly followed the right-turn rule. If there were some changes due to construction of new roads or destruction of old roads, the enumerators had to update the Assignment Area maps. On one occasion, the enumerator noticed a road on the Assignment Area map did not physically exist, and correctly updated the map by crossing it out. Enumerators were very organized. They wrote down addresses, block codes, and area codes on questionnaires, and arranged these questionnaires in order of their lists.

Enumerators communicated that they encounter many dangerous situations; they could meet drunk people, mentally disabled people, or fierce dogs. However, the enumerators tried their best to get the job done with high quality.

Fewer problems occurred during my observation. Many respondents were surprised when the enumerators came to the door to interview them for the Census 2000 as they expected to receive the questionnaires by mail. Most respondents agreed to provide all information for the questionnaires. Of the 14 interviews, only one refused to provide names and dates of birth, and two refused to provide phone numbers to enumerators. For respondents that were busy, call-backs were scheduled at two addresses. For the remaining addresses for which there was no contact, enumerators left a notice with their phone numbers and asked respondents to return their call. The enumerators said that they might receive some calls from these addresses within the evening or the next day. The enumerators planned to come back to these non-responding addresses several times and left a notice during each visit. They even visited these addresses on weekends.

III. Conclusion

I found my observation of Census 2000 List/Enumerate operations very informative. The operators were well trained and organized, and the List/Enumerate operation proceeded smoothly. Most respondents were very cooperative. They were willing to provide their information to the enumerators because they wanted to be counted. However, there were some respondents reluctant to provide their information and some of them just decided to provide part of their information.

cc:

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